



FILED

January 10, 2023
OKLAHOMA SECRETARY
OF STATE

J. Kevin Stitt
Office of the Governor
State of Oklahoma

**EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
EXECUTIVE ORDER 2023-01**

One of a state's most important responsibilities is to protect the lives and safety of its citizens. Paramount among these, is protecting and enhancing the lives of our children. Some of the hardest and most difficult work that any state does is in child welfare. We must continue to meet this challenge head on. As Governor I am committed to protecting our youngest and future generations.

When Oklahoma first began implementing the Pinnacle Plan, our state's child welfare situation was a disaster. While the Pinnacle Plan has served to improve our child welfare system, we must seek continued and ongoing improvement in this area. Currently 6.89 out of every 1,000 Oklahoma children are in an out-of-home placement, which is slightly above the national average of 6 per 1,000. This is a 17 percent decrease since I took office on January 14, 2019. We need to decrease this to 4 per 1,000 children to achieve Top 10 status. Additionally, Oklahoma has made progress improving many of its permanency and re-entry programs, but we need to continue to make improvements ensuring that our state achieves timely and safe permanency for children in the child welfare system. Simply put, we have made great progress in the area of child welfare in Oklahoma, but our work here is not yet done.

Not only must we work to improve our child welfare system, but the best way to address these problems are to ensure children never end up in the system in the first place. The best environment for a child is having their two, biological parents living in the same household. I recently created a HELP Task Force to study and address at-risk pregnancies. But Oklahoma must continue to address problems that occur once children are born. Oklahoma's fathers must do their part as well. Paternal absence is the single greatest risk factor in teen pregnancy for girls. And young men who grew up with their biological father are more than twice as likely to graduate college and less likely to go to jail. To be clear, we cannot leave children in unsafe environments, whether with their biological family or not. But as a state we must do all that we can to provide proper resources to ensure that all our citizens can provide a safe, healthy, and happy home for their children. Our future depends upon it. Improving Oklahoma's child welfare system is not the only challenge; reducing the amount of children in the system is even more critical.

Therefore, I, J. Kevin Stitt, Governor of the State of Oklahoma, pursuant to the power and authority vested in me by Sections 1 and 2 of Article VI of the Oklahoma Constitution, and to the fullest extent permitted under Oklahoma law, hereby order the formation of a Child Welfare Task Force ("Task Force").

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The Task Force shall study, evaluate, and make recommendations regarding policies, programs and proposed legislation that will:

1. Further reduce the time to permanency in the foster care system;
2. Further reduce the amount of re-entries to foster care after discharge to permanency;
3. Identify risk factors that lead to the removal of children from their biological parents' home; and
4. Identify and propose areas of support for biological parents.

The Task Force shall submit to the Governor, the President Pro Tempore of the Oklahoma Senate, and the Speaker of the Oklahoma House of Representatives, a report on or before October 1, 2023, detailing its findings and recommendations.

The Task Force shall be composed of twelve (12) members determined as follows:

1. The Speaker of the House or his designee;
2. The President Pro Tempore of the Senate or his designee; and
3. 2 designees of the Director of the Oklahoma Department of Human Services.

The Governor shall appoint eight (8) members to be determined as follows:

1. 2 members of the Oklahoma state court system;
2. 1 representative from an organization involved in the foster care system;
3. 1 representative from a non-profit or faith-based organization;
4. 1 person with experience advocating for biological families; and
5. 3 at-large members.

The Governor shall select, from the appointed members, a Chair of the Task Force who shall have the authority to create committees and name committee chairs to facilitate the work of the Task Force and shall have the authority to appoint Task Force members and non-members to serve on committees. The Task Force shall meet as often as deemed necessary by the Chair allowing for timely completion of its work. A majority of the members shall constitute a quorum for the purpose of conducting the business of the Task Force. Members, including those appointed to committees who are not members of the Task Force, shall serve without compensation.

The Oklahoma Department of Human Services shall provide staff and administrative support for the Task Force. All Executive departments, officers, agencies, and employees of the State shall cooperate with the Task Force, including providing any information, data, records, and reports as may be requested.

This Executive Order shall be distributed to the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Human Services, the President Pro Tempore of the Oklahoma Senate, and the Speaker of the Oklahoma House of Representatives.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of Oklahoma to be affixed at Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, on this 10th day of January, 2023.

BY THE GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA



J. KEVIN STITT

ATTEST:



BRIAN BINGMAN, SECRETARY OF STATE

